New York State Integrated Pest Management Program

Nature And Source Of Inoculum Of *Aspergillus niger* Causing The Aspergillus Black Mold Disease Of Onions In New York

J. W. Lorbeer
Department of Plant Pathology
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

INTRODUCTION

During 1997, as in 1996, Aspergillus black mold of onion caused by *Aspergillus niger* was not the serious disease problem it had been on a number of onion farms in Orange County, New York during 1995. In that year the high incidence of the disease was primarily related to the extremely hot muggy summer weather which occurred during the latter part of the growing season in late July, August, and early September. When the disease occurs it is characterized by infection of the outer bulb scales and the upper neck region of harvested onion bulbs by the pathogen which produces black mycelium and massive numbers of black spores in these regions of the bulb. A decay of bulb scales in the neck region of harvested onion bulbs frequently occurs on such bulbs which usually are not marketable. New York onion growers, particularly those in Orange County, are concerned that the disease, which annually usually is not the serious problem experienced during 1995, could occur again in the future at the levels experienced during 1995. Therefore, research is needed on the biology of the pathogen and the disease which could lead to practices minimizing the potential for outbreaks of the disease in years of hot humid growing and harvesting conditions when growers might be inclined to attempt to control black mold by utilizing late season fungicide sprays not called for by IPM disease forecasting systems (BLIGHT-ALERT and others) to control onion foliar diseases.

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IPM House
630 W. North St.
New York State Agricultural Experiment Station
Geneva NY 14456
315-878-2353